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Medical Sketch of the Nineteenth Regiment of Kansas Cavalry Volunteers

By MAHLON BAILEY

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Medical Sketch of the Nineteenth Regiment of Kansas Cavalry Volunteers

MAHLON BAILEY

I. INTRODUCTION

IN 1868 the plains Indians, growing increasingly hostile to the building of the Union Pacific railroad and the rapid settlement of the prairies, determined to make a last stand against the advance of civilization. Disregarding their treaty at Medicine Lodge the previous October, they swarmed over the western plains as soon as spring came, murdering and robbing as they went. One band of Cheyennes penetrated as far east as Council Grove, where they attacked the Kaw Indians and robbed the settlers in the vicinity. Other war parties, with arms and ammunition obtained from the Indian agent at Fort Larned, fell upon the unprotected settlements on the Smoky Hill and Saline rivers, and after laying waste these settlements continued their depredations in the valleys of the Solomon and Republican.

United States troops under Gen. Philip H. Sheridan did what they could to suppress the uprising, but their number was wholly inadequate to protect the border of more than 200 miles and guard overland transportation and construction crews on the railroad. Recognizing the futility of a summer campaign, General Sheridan decided to carry the war into the Indians' own country and attack them in winter quarters. In accordance with this plan he called upon Gov. Samuel J. Crawford for a regiment of cavalry. Crawford, having previously offered troops to the President, immediately issued a call for volunteers, and within a few weeks the Nineteenth Kansas cavalry, comprising 1,200 men, was mustered into United States service for a period of six months. Governor Crawford resigned his office and on November 4 was appointed colonel of the regiment.

These troops were ordered to proceed via Camp Beecher (now Wichita) to Camp Supply in the Indian territory. The officers and men, and, as it proved, the guides as well, were unfamiliar with the country south of the Arkansas river; when they reached this region they lost their way and for days wandered around in the canyons of the Cimarron in a severe snowstorm. Intense cold and lack of provisions caused extreme suffering until supplies and guides sent

from Camp Supply finally reached the regiment, enabling it to get to the camp. Here the troops remained until December 7, when under General Sheridan they marched southward in close pursuit of the Indians. By February 15 all the tribes had surrendered except one band of Cheyennes. In March a command sent against this tribe rescued two white women captives and forced the Indians to surrender. The regiment then marched to Fort Hays, where it was mustered out in April, 1869.

This campaign, one of the most notable in the history of Kansas troops, has been described in previous publications of this Society.[1] The account given below, written by the surgeon of the regiment, Dr. Mahlon Bailey, is a unique record of volunteer troops on the plains.[2] It is printed from the original manuscript in the possession of the Kansas State Historical Society.[3]

II. DOCTOR BAILEY'S ACCOUNT

This regiment was organized by Governor Crawford in October, 1868, at Topeka, Kansas. Enlisted for six months to serve in a winter campaign against hostile Indians on the Plains. The organization of the regiment was completed in less than two weeks after the arrival of the first recruits, hence the examination of the men was made in a hurried manner, and a few succeeded, by the aid of their company officers, in getting mustered that were not really fit for soldiers. A large number were young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one—very few over forty—and all together were a fine lot of men physically; the best volunteer regiment I ever saw.

1. Horace L. Moore, "The Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry," *Kansas Historical Collections*, v. 6, pp. 35-52; James A. Hadley, "The Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry and the Conquest of the Plains Indians," *ibid.*, v. 10, pp. 428-456; "John McBee's Account of the Expedition of the Nineteenth Kansas," *ibid.*, v. 17, pp. 361-374.

2. Mahlon Bailey was born March 19, 1835, near Salem, Ohio. He began the study of medicine at Iowa State University, and later attended St. Louis Medical College, graduating there in 1858. In May, 1858, he moved to Kansas and settled at Emporia, becoming the first physician in the town.

In 1861 Doctor Bailey entered the army as surgeon of the Tenth Kansas infantry, but resigned, and in May, 1862, was made assistant surgeon of the First Kansas infantry. He was promoted to surgeon of the regiment in June, 1863, and held this position until the regiment was mustered out at Fort Leavenworth in 1864. He then went to Topeka, and in partnership with Doctor Stormont, resumed the practice of medicine. In October, 1864, he was married to Miss Laura Jarbeo of Muscatine, Iowa. When in 1868 the Nineteenth Kansas regiment was organized Doctor Bailey was made surgeon and served through the six months' Indian campaign with Generals Sheridan and Custer. At the close of the campaign he returned to Topeka, where he remained until 1870, when he moved to New Chicago, now called Chanute.

While engaged in the practice of medicine, Doctor Bailey contributed valuable articles to medical journals, and in 1869 was president of the Kansas State Medical Society. After his removal to Chanute he abandoned the medical profession and devoted his time to banking and other business pursuits. He established the first bank in Neosho county. He was an active Republican, and was a delegate to the state convention in 1860, and again in 1876. Doctor Bailey's family consisted of one daughter and four sons. He continued to reside in Chanute until his death in 1893.

3. The manuscript also was made the basis of an article in *Transactions of the Kansas State Medical Society* (1869), pp. 33-40.

The men were from all parts of the state, and many were from malarial districts, hence there was considerable ague at first, but it disappeared very fast after we got on the Plains.

As is always the case when recruits first go into camp, there were a great many cases of diarrhoea and dysentery, or rather a combination of the two diseases, and I think might appropriately be designated dysenteric-diarrhoea. Generally of a mild form, however, and none of the cases assumed that severe chronic form which proved so fatal during the late war.

The regiment left Topeka on the fifth of November, leaving only one man—a case of remittent fever. The men were well provided with clothing, including ponchos, but were without tents or shelter of any kind.

On the eighth it rained all day, snowed in the evening and turned very cold, the men suffering severely. Left a bad case of pneumonia at Emporia in charge of Doctor Jacobs.

On the twelfth we arrived at Camp Beecher[4] on the Arkansas river, at the mouth of the Little Arkansas, where we remained one day; received five days' rations of hard-bread, pork and coffee; left in hospital one case of pneumonia, one case of periostitis, and one case of accidental gunshot wound.

Crossed the Arkansas river on the morning of the fourteenth, bidding adieu to the last vestige of civilization, directing our course southwest, under the guidance of a scout known as "Apache Bill."

On the night of the fifteenth, after raining all day, it turned intensely cold, froze hard and the wind blew a perfect hurricane from the north. Were encamped in a bleak place on the Nenescah,[5] among sand hills. Several of the men had their toes frozen, but with the exception of one severe case of pneumonia and some twenty desertions, no other bad results from the night's exposure.

On the night of the eighteenth, while in camp on Medicine Lodge creek, we were favored with a stampede of some three hundred horses. Several men were hurt, which swelled the list of contusions for the month, and the regiment was delayed one day, which was an important item, as the distance to supplies was about a hundred miles, forage all gone, and rations nearly out. The time, however, was improved by sending out details to obtain buffalo meat.

On the night of the twenty-first it commenced snowing and continued for thirty-six hours; not less than two feet of snow fell.

4. Established May 11, 1868, on the site of present Wichita.—Hortense Balderston Campbell, "Camp Beecher," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 3, pp. 172-185.

5. Probably the Ninnescah river.

On the twenty-second it was impossible to move. We were encamped in a little brushy valley, and fortunately had plenty of wood. Entirely out of rations and difficult to get buffalo on account of the snow, which made it impossible to see more than a few yards. A great many of the men actually suffered from hunger; and the limited amount of buffalo that was obtained saved us the necessity of eating horse-flesh, not only for this day, but for the next six days.

After one-and-a-half day's delay we resumed the march, expecting to find Cimmaron [Cimarron] river in a few miles, and after winding around sand breaks until dark, encamped within about three miles of the river, and twenty-five miles below where we should have struck it. The men and horses were becoming very much exhausted. The next morning parties were sent out to obtain buffalo meat, and in the afternoon Colonel Crawford took all that had horses in condition to travel, which amounted to but little more than half of the regiment, and struck out to find "Camp Supply," an indefinite distance of course. The balance of the regiment remained in camp, being unable to move, and depended entirely upon buffalo to live, which were plentiful by going a few miles from camp. Salt water was carried from the Cimmaron in canteens to season the meat with, and without anything else we succeeded in living. The men suffered considerably from dysentery in a mild form. My supply of opiates was soon exhausted, and I prepared a mixture of olive oil, turpentine, fl. ex. ipecac and creosote, which proved to be very efficient. A number of the men indulged in eating large quantities of hackberries, which in a few cases produced rather serious results. The broken seeds, or stones, became impacted in the rectum, causing complete obstruction, and could only be removed by using a scoop. The camp forever afterwards was known among the men as "Hackberry Point."

While here I evaporated just one half pint of water from the Cimmaron river and obtained, when perfectly dry, ninety-four grains of salt. What is properly the salt plains of the Cimmaron is a strip of country along the south side of the river, about opposite this point.

On the night of the twenty-eighth of November we received rations and forage by Captain Pliley, who had been sent forward on the 22nd to find Camp Supply and procure provisions.

On the first day of December the detachment joined Colonel Crawford, who had arrived three days before at General Sheridan's supply camp, situated on Beaver creek, near its junction with north

fork of the Canadian, three hundred and fifty miles west of Topeka, Kansas, where we remained for seven days, and started for Fort Cobb. Left a detachment of about three hundred dismounted men under command of Major Dimon, and in charge of the surgeon of the post; ten of the number on sick report, three of whom were wounded by accident. Upon the arrival of Doctor Robert Aikman, second assistant surgeon of the regiment, some time in December, he took charge of the detachment. His reports and the reports of a detachment of about eighty men sent to Fort Dodge, and also the reports of two companies that were detailed to escort trains, are not included in my reports.

We arrived at Fort Cobb after twelve days marching during very cold weather. The regiment was provided with shelter tents, had plenty to eat and enjoyed excellent health.

We moved south to the east end of the Wichita mountains (Medicine Bluff creek) in the fore part of January, where we remained for about two months. Good country, excellent water and plenty of fuel. As the reports for January and February show there was no sickness at all. The weather was generally mild, no snow, considerable rain, and with the exception of a "norther" occasionally, was decidedly pleasant. The men built fireplaces to their "pup" tents, and generally had rations sufficient, to which was added no small amount of game, such as deer, antelope, turkeys, etc.

On the second of March the command under General Custer, consisting of the Seventh U. S. cavalry, mounted, and the Nineteenth Kansas, dismounted, started west in search of the Cheyenne Indians. The men suffered considerably from sore and blistered feet, but it very soon became evident that the dismounted cavalry could outmarch the mounted. And when, on the fifth day out, General Custer divided his command, he sent about two thirds of the mounted and one third of the dismounted a short route to supplies, and with the balance of his command, made a march of some three hundred miles in seventeen days, on short rations, which were entirely exhausted, and the men devoured with a relish the mules that were killed because they could travel no farther, and decided the meat better than the Texas cattle furnished by the commissary department.

After the reunion of the command on the Washita river, seventy-five miles south of Camp Supply, marching was commenced at the rate of twenty-five miles a day, until our arrival at Fort Hays. Many of the men became tired and foot-sore, but fortunately there

was a large number of empty wagons along, that, after considerable delay, were obtained to transport those that were unfit to march. The total distance marched by the regiment was about twelve hundred miles, two thirds of the distance on foot.

I shall not enter into any description of the country over which we passed, further than to say that after crossing the Arkansas, one hundred and fifty miles southwest of Topeka, with the exception of the immediate vicinity of the east end of the Wichita mountains, there is no country over which we marched that is not appropriately named the "Great American Desert," and in everything that constitutes a country susceptible to settlement, is as much inferior to the plains west of Ellsworth in Kansas, as those plains are to a good agricultural country. In fact, the whole region south of the Arkansas, and especially south of the Cimmaron river, and west of the Wichita mountains is one vast desert of red clay and sand, with scattering gypsum and salt deposits.

The following is a consolidation of the monthly reports of the regiment, which gave the number taken sick and wounded during each month. It shows the whole number taken sick was two hundred and sixty-two, and the number wounded thirty-four, and also that more than half of the number of cases for the term of service—from October 30th, 1868, to April 16th, 1869—occurred in the month of November, which can be accounted for by the sudden changes from civil to camp life, excessive rough weather, and want of shelter and sufficient provisions, etc. Although during the month the number taken on sick report is large, in comparison with the other months, the cases were generally mild—only requiring to be relieved from duty for a few days. The morning reports show that the average number on sick report was but little more than one percent of the strength of the command.

Report of Sick and Wounded of the Nineteenth Regiment, Kansas Cavalry Volunteers,

From October 30, 1868, to April 18, 1869.

DISEASES.	Taken sick in—										
	October (2 days)	November	December	January	February	March	April (8 days)	Total	Returned to duty	Died	Sent to hospital
Typho-malarial fever	....	....	....	1	....	....	....	1	....	1	....
Remittent fever	2	1	2	....	....	....	....	5	3	....	2
Intermittent fever	4	40	17	5	3	11	4	84	84	....	....
Acute diarrhoea	5	12	7	2	....	....	2	28	28	....	....
Acute dysentery	....	32	9	5	3	4	2	55	55	....	....
Tonsillitis	....	1	....	....	....	....	....	1	1	....	....
Gonorrhoea	....	1	1	....	....	....	....	2	2	....	....
Acute rheumatism	....	3	1	1	1	1	....	7	7	....	....
Neuralgia	2	....	....	....	....	....	....	2	2	....	....
Conjunctivitis	....	2	....	....	1	1	....	4	4	....	....
Catarrh	....	5	2	....	1	1	....	9	9	....	....
Pneumonia	....	3	1	....	1	1	1	7	4	....	3
Pleurisy	....	2	....	....	....	1	....	3	3	....	....
Colic	....	1	....	....	....	....	....	1	1	....	....
Constipation	....	....	....	....	....	1	....	1	....	....	1
Inguinal hernia	....	1	1	....	....	....	....	2	2	....	....
Inflammation of testicle	....	1	....	....	....	....	....	1	1	....	....
Inflammation of periosteum	....	2	....	....	....	....	....	2	....	....	2
Abscess	....	4	2	1	....	....	....	7	7	....	....
Boils	2	7	1	1	....	1	....	12	12	....	....
Ulcers	....	2	4	....	....	1	....	7	7	....	....
Burns and scalds	....	....	1	2	....	....	....	3	3	....	....
Contusions	1	12	1	....	....	....	....	14	14	....	....
Sprains	....	2	2	....	2	....	1	7	7	....	....
Frostbites	....	7	9	1	....	....	....	17	17	....	....
Gunshot wounds	....	5	2	1	....	....	....	8	4	....	4
Lacerated wounds	....	....	1	1	....	....	....	2	2	....	....
Obstruction of rectum	....	4	....	....	....	....	....	4	4	....	....
Totals	16	150	64	21	12	23	10	296	283	1	12

The following is the average percent on sick report:

During October	1.	percent
During November	1.13	percent
During December	1.3	percent
During January	1.1	percent
During February	0.7	percent
During March	0.6	percent
During April	0.75	percent
Total number taken sick	262	
Wounded	34	

Which makes about one percent during the term of service, or in other words, the average number on sick report was one man in every hundred.

This includes all cases of sick and wounded that were relieved from duty. I have not the necessary statistics to make comparisons, but I think the above report indicates that the regiment suffered less from sickness than is usual among troops, even on the Plains; and it also shows that as far as the health of the troops is concerned, there can be no objection to winter campaigning, and the great "bug-bear," that active operations must stop on the Plains when winter sets in is, I think, thoroughly demolished by last winter's campaign. In fact, as far as health and comfort of the troops are concerned (to say nothing of other military advantages), I would prefer the winter to the summer months.

Of those sent to the hospital all recovered and were returned to duty except one, who died in the hospital at Fort Hays.

Besides the death of typho-malarial fever, reported above, there was one man accidentally shot and instantly killed. Also one man died of disease in the detachment under charge of Assistant Surgeon Aikman. One man died of disease, and one was accidentally killed in the companies that were detached from the regiment, making in all six deaths, four from disease and two killed.

The case of typho-malarial fever that proved fatal was a severe and well-marked case. Treated with quinine, whisky, &c.

The treatment of dysentery was generally commenced with epsom salts or castor oil and turpentine, which was followed by opium combined with camphor or ipecac.

The cases of pneumonia were all severe; all treated with stimulants, opiates and tonics, together with extensive blistering; all recovered, although exposed to an extent that would be sufficient to account for the death of any case of pneumonia in private practice.

The cases of frostbite were all of the toes—none bad enough to require amputation.

Of the gunshot wounds reported, all were accidental, and none very severe, only one requiring a surgical operation, and that only the amputation of a finger.

While I speak with pleasure of the good health and few casualties of the regiment, I regret to say that on account of some philanthropic, "milk-and-water" Indian policy of those high in authority, we were not allowed to punish those heinous savage outlaws for the atrocious deeds committed, but a few weeks before upon defenseless women and children of our own state. Deeds, which twelve hundred brave men of Kansas volunteered to avenge on the first sound of the bugle to arms! Men who were able and willing to stand any exposure, march any distance, endure any hardships necessary to punish in a manner that would forever secure their own homes and families, and the wives and children of frontier settlers from the merciless savage brutes, who consider every act of kindness an indication of fear, and the fostering care of the government an admission of its inability or fear to punish them.

Before closing, I wish to extend to the commander and all the officers of the regiment, my regards for the prompt assent at all times, to all measures suggested by the medical officers in regard to the health and sanitary condition of the command, and their non-interference with matters pertaining to the medical department.

I also take the privilege to express my high respect for the assistant surgeon, E. K. Russell, who was constantly with the regiment, for the prompt and skillful manner in which he performed his duties, always ready and willing to do all in his power to aid the sick, and no less vigilant in guarding against malingerers.

Also to Assistant Surgeon Robert Aikman, who had charge of a detachment of the regiment, and proved himself to be an efficient officer and a gentleman.

And I must say further, that if the medical officers of the regiment were more fortunate in one thing than another, it was in having a hospital steward, J. G. Land, that in everything pertaining to the duties of a steward, could not be excelled. He combined with superior qualifications an enduring energy, and a disposition to promptly do all his duties that will long be remembered by those connected with him.

Excerpts from a *Kansas Historical Quarterly* department called

Bypaths of Kansas History

Cheyenne Scalps, Ten Cents Each

From the Junction City *Weekly Union*, December 28, 1867.

Our town has been full of Kaw Indians during the past week. They have abandoned their regular winter hunt on account of the hostility of the Cheyennes. When they came to town Stover was here, but instead of introducing them, as was his duty, he left town and has not been heard of since. The party brought in about twenty-five Cheyenne scalps, which they retailed out along the road in small bits at ten cents a piece, which was a business transaction. We believe this is the first time they have visited us since the locomotive came among us, and their gaping astonishment is indescribable.

State Capitol Square in 1875

From *The Commonwealth*, Topeka, April 3, 1875.

The law creating a board of state house commissioners has been repealed and the legislature has abandoned the capitol square to the cows. The secretary of state is the custodian of the miniature Sahara which encompasses the state house, and he has no appropriations in his hands to expend upon the grounds. He therefore solicits "aid" in rendering the grounds at least respectable in appearance. Citizens are invited to set out trees in the inclosure, and places will be assigned to those who wish to do so. The grounds ought to possess one or more specimens of every tree native to Kansas. Topeka is interested in seeing the public ground beautified. Ample pasturage for cows can be found elsewhere.

He Gets His Man

From the *Kansas Reporter*, Louisville, May 3, 1877.

Sheriff [J. H.] Shehi has no use for handcuffs. When he gets a prisoner he just cuts off the fellow's pants buttons and keeps him busy holding up his breeches while the sheriff quietly marches him to jail without any trouble. Necessity is said to be the mother of invention, but in this case it is the father.

Buffalo Hunters

From Dodge City *Times*, August 18, 1877.

Dickinson county has a buffalo hunter named Mr. Warnock, who has killed as high as 658 in one winter.—*Edwards County Leader.*

Oh, dear! What a mighty hunter! Ford county has twenty men who each has killed five times that number in one winter. The best on record, however, is that of Tom Dixon, who killed 120 at one stand in 40 minutes, and who from the 15th of September to the 20th of October, killed 2,173 buffalo. Come on with some big hunters now, if you have any.

THE BONE BUSINESS

From the Dodge City *Times*, August 3, 1878.

A large number of teams came in from the range Wednesday loaded with bones, which were gathered for miles south. A regular business in gathering bones has long been established though not so profitable as formerly. Carcasses are not as numerous, the buffalo is becoming extinct and the long horn gives up his bones to the slaughter pen, being driven over the plains with less loss. There are thousands of buffalo and cattle that are killed and die annually; and the bones are gathered at all seasons of the year, thus affording constant employment to a large number of men and teams. The bones are shipped East by the carloads, where they are ground and used for fertilizing and manufactured into numerous useful articles. The bone business extends over a great portion of western Kansas.

BULLETS IN THE AIR OR EARLY-DAY DODGE CITY AFTER DARK

From the Dodge City *Times*, July 27, 1878.

Yesterday morning about 3 o'clock this peaceful suburban city was thrown into unusual excitement, and the turmoil was all caused by a rantankerous cowboy who started the mischief by a too free use of his little revolver.

In Dodge City, after dark, the report of a revolver generally means business and is an indication that somebody is on the war path, therefore when the noise of this shooting and the yells of excited voices rang out on the midnight breeze, the sleeping community awoke from their slumbers, listened a while to the click of the revolver, wondered who was shot this time, and then went to sleep again. But in the morning many dreaded to hear the result of the war lest it should be a story of bloodshed and carnage, or of death to some familiar friend. But in this instance there was an abundance of noise and smoke, with no very terrible results.

It seems that three or four herders were paying their respects to the city and its institutions, and as is usually their custom, remained until about 3 o'clock in the morning, when they prepared to return to their camps. They buckled on their revolvers, which they were not allowed to wear around town, and mounted their horses, when all at once one of them conceived the idea that to finish the night's revelry and give the natives due warning of his departure, he must do some shooting, and forthwith he commenced to bang away, one of the bullets whizzing into a dance hall near by, causing no little commotion among the participants in the "dreamy waltz" and quadrille. Policemen Earp and Masterson made a raid on the shootist, who gave them two or three volleys, but fortunately without effect. The policemen returned the fire and followed the herders with the intention of arresting them. The firing then became general, and some rooster who did not exactly understand the situation, perched himself in a window of the dance hall and indulged in a promiscuous shoot all by himself. The herders rode across the bridge followed by the officers. A few yards from the bridge one of the herders fell from his horse from weakness caused by a wound in the arm which he had received during the fracas. The other herder made good his escape. The wounded

man was properly cared for and his wound, which proved to be a bad one, was dressed by Dr. McCarty. His name is George Hoy, and he is rather an intelligent looking young man.

CHIPS

From the Pearlette *Call*, April 15, 1879.

You know wood is scarce in Meade county, and coal is expensive, hence you will doubtless wonder what we do for fuel.

Those who can afford it buy coal in Dodge, at $7 to $9 per ton, while others, having teams, get some wood in the canyons east of us.

But the most of us burn chips—buffalo chips we call them, but the majority of those we find were doubtless dropped by Texas cattle when passing north.

These chips make a tolerable fair fire, but of course burn out very rapidly; consequently to keep up a good fire you must be continually poking the chips in and taking the ashes out. Still we feel very thankful for even this fuel.

It was comical to see how gingerly our wives handled these chips at first. They commenced by picking them up between two sticks, or with a poker. Soon they used a rag, and then a corner of their apron. Finally, growing hardened, a wash after handling them was sufficient. And now? Now it is out of the bread, into the chips and back again—and not even a dust of the hands!

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